

Questions January 15, 2014

Q. I was at the December county meeting and a question was asked about the “International” code in reference to the revised building codes that were adopted by the Building and Development Dept. Did you find out why it is called an “international” code?

A. We asked the Building and Development Dept. about this and they said the construction code used to be called the “Southern Building Code” but it was renamed approximately 10 years ago to include the United States and its Territories and all the various codes that now make up the International Code Council. It has nothing to do with the United Nations or any other country but is just the name that was chosen.

Q. Why does the county adopt national building codes?

A. When I took office in 2001, our county had never had building codes. In other words, anybody could build what they wanted, where they wanted and how they wanted. We have always been lucky in that most of the builders in our county have always been reputable. But we found out as our county continued to grow, more and more people were claiming to be builders and while it was not the norm, there were some scary construction methods being used on some houses.

Q. Have the building codes helped in the county?

A. As most people know, I am against putting in too many regulations because I do not want to infringe on our basic principals of free choice. But the problem was that we were in danger of having our property values devalued because of a few sub-standard construction practices and in some cases those practices also impacted the safety of a structure. So someone coming to Union County and purchasing a home had no way to know what was behind the walls. Was the electricity properly installed, were decks and balconies correctly built to withstand large weight loads, were spindles on decks the correct distance apart to keep children from falling through or hanging their head between them, were the proper size windows installed in upstairs rooms where a person could escape in case of a fire? The list just went on and on.

Q. Has the Union County Building and Development Dept been fair and reasonable with the new regulations?

A. Absolutely! I searched out and found Randy Day, our Director and he found Gavin King and Nora Lawn, and they have done an exceptional job. I think if you talk to any builder or new homeowner, you will find that they have been dealt with fairly and reasonably, although firmly when needed. There are always some national regulations that sometimes go overboard and our employees do an excellent job of applying common sense to the International Building Codes. In addition to a fine staff, we have many great builders in the county, for which we are very fortunate.